



**TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS**

TOWN HALL
One Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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Planner@montague-ma.gov

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION
~~DRAFT~~ MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday May 14, 2026, 6:30 PM
Annex Meeting Room, Town Hall and via Zoom
Meeting was recorded**

6:31pm: **ROLL CALL PRESENT:** Mark Fairbrother (chair) Anthony Reiber, Al Averill, Justin Fermann, Sean Werle, Margaux Reckard, Toby Carter. **ABSENT:** Donna Francis
STAFF: Maureen Pollock (Staff Liaison, Planner/Conservation Agent), Chris Nolen-Zeller (Assistant Administrator) **ALSO PRESENT:** Gary Houle, William Stratford, Melissa Coady, Craig French, Todd Kirton (Tighe & Bond),

Meeting Minutes from April 9, 2026 were tabled.

PUBLIC MEETING:

RDA #2026-04 - Request for Determination of Applicability, filed by **Gary Houle** to determine whether the proposed construction of a new 32' x 40' 3-car detached garage within buffer zone and Riverfront Area at **31-33 Randall Road (Parcel # 21-0-141)** is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act.

The Conservation Agent reviews the state of this project; MassDEP did not receive an application. The Conservation agent sent an email copy to MassDEP; due to the proximity to a perennial stream MassDEP is requiring a Notice of Intent (NOI). This information was sent to Mr. Houle in an email that afternoon. Mark Fairbrother asked the applicant if he wants to move forward with Commission's review and vote of a positive determination, thus requiring a filing of NOI, or if he would like to withdraw the RDA without prejudice and file a NOI. Various conversation about the process of filing an NOI between the Commissioners and the applicant.

Sean Werle asks if the Commission agrees with MassDEP. The Agent responds that the Commission has no digression to override MassDEP. Werle suggests that the applicant withdraw the RDA and thinks that he should have been notified sooner. The Agent apologizes about the timing of MassDEP's decision. Mr. Houle withdraws his RDA. The Agent recommends that Mr. Houle hire a qualified consultant to help him with the NOI filing, The applicant has a list of qualified professionals.

MOTION by S. Werle to accept the withdraw of RDA #2026-04 - Request for Determination of Applicability, filed by Gary Houle. Seconded by M. Reckard. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE). MOTION PASSES (7-0) 6:43pm

RDA #2026-05 - Request for Determination of Applicability, filed by **William Stratford** to determine whether the proposed construction of a driveway within Riverfront Area for a single-family house at **Dry Hill Road (Parcel # 45-0-60)** is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act.

The Agent had a site visit and spoke to the applicant; MassDEP is concerned that the driveway for the project is within 200 feet of a perennial stream. Mark Stinson informed the Commission that an NOI is required. William Stratford withdraws RDA 2026-05 and will file a Notice of Intent.

MOTION by S. Werle to accept the withdrawal of RDA #2026-05 - Request for Determination of Applicability, filed by William Stratford. Seconded by M. Reckard. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE). MOTION PASSES (7-0) 6:48pm

PUBLIC HEARING:

NOI #2026-04 – Notice of Intent, filed by the **Town of Montague** for the Former Strathmore Mill Abatement, Demolition, and Restoration Project at **8 and 20 Canal Road, Turners Falls** within Bordering Land Subject to Flooding and within the Riverfront Area of the Connecticut River.

Melissa Coady from Tighe & Bond presents the plan. Coady reviews a slide deck which reviews the history and background of the demolition project going back to May 2007. Because the 2007 permit could not be extended, they are filing a new Order of Conditions. Coady reviews the location of the project and an aerial map. There is bordering land subject to flooding associated with the Connecticut River. There is riverfront area, and then there's buffer zone, from both the Connecticut River and the wall, or man-made bank, of the power canal. FEMA flood mapping has been updated. Rare aquatic and plant species have been considered. The executed scope of work will depend on the value of bids for the project, because the Town has a fixed amount of funding. "They're going to do as much with it as they can." Coady discusses alternate plans. Craig French describes how the tailrace under the canal would be capped and filled. Building 9 is not part of the scope of work. A map of alternates 1, 2, and 3 is shown.

Todd Kirton from Tighe & Bond continues that there will be very little waste. The buildings are nearly empty. There are windows, metal, beams, and brick. On-site debris will be crushed and used as backfill and structural support. A BUD application will be filed. Clean material will cap the site. There are access constraints regarding the size and weight of equipment. Dust control, erosion control, debris collecting and stockpile management will be implemented.

Al Averill asks about how dust is controlled. Kirton answers "water...spray." Kirton describes the process of controlling dust.

Material that comes down will do so inside the footprint of the building. It is a controlled process. Asbestos-containing waste will be treated and removed under special conditions. A grading plan, catch basins, erosion blanket and other erosion control like netting is briefly discussed.

Tighe and Bond has a DEP number and comments, but no comments from Natural Heritage yet; they will return at a future meeting.

The Agent asks about the nature of the DEP comments. Coady replies the DEP comments are related to Natural Heritage, statutory language, flood mapping, and locations for stockpiles.

MOTION by Mark Fairbrother to accept the request to continue the Public Hearing for NOI #2026-04 filed by the Town of Montague for the Former Strathmore Mill Abatement, Demolition, and Restoration Project at 20 and 8 Canal Road, Turners Falls within Bordering Land Subject to Flooding and within the Riverfront Area of the Connecticut River to the June 11, 2026 meeting. Second by Al Averill. VOTE:

Mark Fairbrother (AYE), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE). MOTION PASSES (7-0) 7:36pm

OLD BUSINESS:

EmergCert 2026-01 – FirstLight Power Services LLC – Review/discuss weekly monitoring report submitted from applicant and MassDEP’s 30-day extension to the Emergency Certification.

The Agent has been forwarding the weekly reports to Commissioners; work is nearly complete, but MassDEP extended the timeline so FirstLight can finalize their repairs.

Anthony Reiber asks if pistons will be replaced this summer. The Agent replies that the pistons will be replaced at the rate of two a year.

Town of Montague Open Space and Recreation Plan - The Agent thanks the Commission for attending the recent Open Space and Recreation Plan meeting. The document is finalized and ready to go to the State. The Agent requests that the Chair signs a letter of support.

MOTION by Anthony Reiber that Mark Fairbrother can sign a letter of Support for the 2026 Montague Open Space and Recreation Plan. Seconded by J. Fermann. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (Abstain), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE). MOTION PASSES (67-0) 7:40pm

ADJOURN:

MOTION by the Chair TO ADJOURN. ~~by~~ Seconded by Al Averill. VOTE: Mark Fairbrother (Aye), Anthony Reiber (AYE), Al Averill (AYE), Justin Fermann (AYE), Sean Werle (AYE), Toby Carter (AYE), Margaux Reckard (AYE). MOTION PASSES (7-0) 7:41pm